

**Chafee Foster Care Independence Program  
Missouri Department of Social Services – Children’s Division  
Final Progress Report for Fiscal Years 2000-2004**

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**(a) A report on the specific accomplishments and progress toward meeting each of the program purposes:**

**Help youth make the transition to self-sufficiency:**

The Children’s Division (CD) has used the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) funds received from FFY 2000-2004 to staff one state level coordinator. The state level coordinator position is responsible for program development and coordination, implementation, resource development, training, administrative and budgetary oversight, technical assistance, and policy development.

CD has also used CFCIP funds to staff the 12 ILP Specialists positions located throughout the state since 2000. The Specialists work directly and collaboratively with the case managers, foster parents, contracted providers, and youth. They are responsible for local program coordination, service delivery, community resource development, contractor compliance, on-going consultation and training to agency staff, foster parents, and other providers. They provide direct services to youth in skill assessments and training on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. The Specialists also provide services through youth camps, retreats, and conferences. Referrals for CFCIP services are commonly made to the ILP Specialist from youth’s case manager or foster care providers, other agencies or by self-referral.

- ILP staff provided comprehensive skills assessments for all youth enrolled in ILP for ages 13-21 until July 1, 2003 when eligibility for services changed from age 13 to 14 due to state budget cuts. In June 2003 Missouri used two technical assistance days with the National Resource Center for Youth Services to provide a two-day training on how to utilize the Ansell/Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA). In October 2003 Missouri switch from using the Daniel Memorial Assessment for Life Skills to using the ACLSA statewide.
- Youth who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 have been provided the opportunity to participate in life skills training classes when they become age appropriate.

Youth ages 13-15 were provide services under the *Choices* until June 30, 2003. *Choices* was a pre-independent living life skills instruction program focused on soft skills with emphasis on healthy relationship building, self-esteem and community involvement. The learning activity primarily takes place in the classroom setting, but experiential learning is made available through seminars. Each Area/Region of the state determined the frequency of seminars. Contracted providers were used to provide program coordination and services areas of the state.

- An array of services is available and a continuum of support for foster care youth between the ages of 16 and 21 to assist them in transitioning out of care and reaching self-sufficiency. We believe there are three major components to self-sufficiency: life skills, education, and employment. Life skills training remain a large component of Missouri's Independent Living Program. Youth are provided information about other available Chafee services by the ILP Specialists, Case Managers or life skills facilitators. Services are to be used to assist youth in complementing their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure they recognize and accept personal responsibility in preparation for and the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. All youth ages 16 and over are required to have an independent living case plan regardless of their permanency goal. They shall be involved in their case planning to address the development of skills and resources needed to facilitate their transition to self-sufficiency.
- Chafee funds continues to be utilized to support Missouri's Aftercare program for youth who had exited state custody at age 18 and older, but have not yet reached age 21. At the recommendation of stakeholders and ILP staff the age requirement to be eligible for Aftercare services was changed from age 18 to 17.5. Additionally funds will be used to for administration and facilitation of the foster youth advisory boards.

### **Life Skills Assessment and Curriculum**

Missouri requires a life skills assessment for all youth referred to ILP. The assessment provides the ILP Specialist, case manager, and care provider information on the youth's level of functioning. These assessments continue to serve as the basis for planning and can help reinforce the collaborative relationship between the youth and the caregiver. Until October 2003, Missouri used the Daniel Memorial Independent Living Assessment for Life Skills. Currently, the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment is used to assess youth referred to ILP and prior to youth beginning life skills training.

A basic life skills training curriculum has been used statewide. The curriculum was designed to have the flexibility to adapt modules to meet the youth's cultural and geographic needs. The curriculum lists resources for instructional materials, simple life skills activities and addresses goals and objectives for the following skills category:

- Communication skills
- Self-esteem
- Community Resources
- Transportation
- Housing

- Educational/Vocational Planning
- Employment
- Money Management
- Home Management
- Health
- Legal Issues

Group size depends on the availability of youth in the given area. In order to provide quality services, the groups are recommended to be maintained at a minimum of six (6) with a maximum of fifteen (15).

### **Youth Development and Involvement**

Missouri's philosophy for its youth in care is one of empowerment, leadership and responsibility. CD continues to recognize the importance of and remains committed to youth involvement and development. Current and former foster youth are used and paid as contractors to serve various roles within the program. Some are paid as graduate assistant or co-facilitators in life skills training, office assistants or chaperones. When possible, youth assisted in foster parent STARS pre-service and in-service trainings. Additional trainings included Transitional Living Advocate and Court Appointed Special Advocates. Youth are often invited to participate and speak on youth panels, facilitate and lead conference workshops. Youth on the State Youth Advisory Board have for several years hosted and designed the entire annual youth empowerment conference. Workshops and conference activities are generally led by the youth.

CD continues to fund activities that provide youth with opportunities to enhance their self-esteem, to be supportive of each other, leadership training and to development a sense of empowerment and control in their lives. One opportunity was the formation of the Area and State Youth Advisory Boards (AYAB). CD established and supported the development AYABs in all seven administrative areas and a State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB). AYABs consist of youth and alumni involved in various aspects of ILP. SYAB is comprised of youth and alumni from throughout the state who represent their respective AYABs. SYAB provides youth with opportunities to give policy and procedural input to CD staff and empower board members who, in turn can empower other youth in out-of-home care. Since 1993, SYAB has been meeting, at minimum, on a quarterly basis. AYAB meetings are held ranging from monthly to quarterly depending the projects they are working on.

AYAB and SYAB members are involved in panel presentations and various state/area conferences regarding what the Independent Living Program has meant to them and how it how it can make a difference. Other youth involvement in the past several years included:

- Meeting with legislators during the Annual Child Advocacy Day and other significant legislative days to provide information and advocate for foster care and independent living services.
- Speaking at community and agency meetings to provide information about foster care, adoption and ILP issues.

- Assisting with training of new CD staff, foster parents, transitional living and other issues.
- Applying and participating in other community youth boards or councils.
- Organizing and participating in appreciation events for foster and adoptive parents.
- Providing peer counseling.
- Organizing and designing area and state youth conferences.
- Developing community service projects or projects involving younger foster children.
- Providing independent living information to foster parents, juvenile court staff, and other youth.

In collaboration with SYAB, Missouri launched a website [www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee](http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee) to provide information about the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program during June 2003. This site is updated on a regular basis to provide information about available services or news about Chafee.

During 2003 SYAB worked very hard to produce a video for recruitment of foster homes for older youth. In December 2003 a contractor was hired to shoot and edit the video. Copies of the video became available for distribution to SYAB youth, CD staff, and other private youth serving agencies.

### **Transitional Living Program**

Missouri's Transitional Living Program (TLP) offers youth ages 16 and older supervised living situations ranging from a more restrictive to a less restrictive setting, based on the readiness of the youth. These living situations allow for some autonomy but still provide the needed support and supervision that will increase the likelihood of self-sufficiency. Three different transitional living placement options have been available for the last several years:

#### **Transitional Living Advocate – (TLA)**

The Transitional Living Advocate provides youth with a safe place to stay, opportunity to practice the life skills learned through the classroom setting, encouragement and guidance in regard to employment, education and/or training, and preparation for successful transition from DFS custody. The youth must be at least 16 years old and be currently attending or successfully completed life skills training.

#### **Transitional Living Group Home (TLG)**

A licensed, residential, child care site where older youth (ages 16-20) concentrate on preparation for independent living and completion of their educational/vocational programs in a supervised group setting. Youth transition from the more restrictive residential to a group home setting. Youth are expected to maintain employment and develop goals and plans for their future. Youth must be at least 16 years old and in the process of completing or have successfully completed life skills training.

#### **Transitional Living Single/Scattered Site Apartments (TLS)**

This placement option has offered youth (ages 17-20) transitioning from a TLP group home to an apartment setting, the opportunity to live on their own or with a roommate in a semi-supervised setting. Youth placed in this setting demonstrate the ability to make

responsible decisions, maintain employment, and have a clear understanding of the financial and emotional demands of living independently. They must have successfully completed the life skills training. Youth in this type of placement receive support and guidance through a contracted provider.

### **Independent Living Arrangement**

This placement type is the next step in the natural progression after successfully completing a Transitional Living Scattered Site placement. Youth are provided practical living experiences in this type of placement, before they exit state custody. Youth live on his/her own, usually in an apartment or college campus setting, with minimal supervision from their Case Manager. A direct payment of \$307.00 per month is made to the youth to assist in paying his/her own bills and rent. The youth is expected to part time work and continue going to school or some type of continuing education program.

### **Computer Camp**

In an effort to keep current with technological needs, youth have been provided with the opportunity to attend computer camp since 1999. CD has contracted with Instructional Access to provide computer training and computers for youth. Over 100 youth have participated in training on Microsoft Office Professional Application Software since 1999. At the end of the training, the youth receives the new state-of-the-art computer equipment they used during the 2 ½ days training period.

### **Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative**

In an effort to improve outcomes for youth leaving foster care Missouri was selected by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) to pilot two youth initiative sites. JCYOI began partnering with Missouri in December 2001 in Kansas City and the metropolitan St. Louis area. JCYOI's goal was to accomplish three key strategies: youth leadership boards, community partnership boards, and Opportunity Passports. In April 2003 JCYOI withdrew their funding from the St. Louis site, due to budget cuts. CD continues to work with JCYOI in Kansas City to assist them in educating the communities to support foster youth and to understand the importance of involving youth in the decision making process that affects their lives.

### **Youth Conferences and Training Activities**

During this reporting period, the Youth Empowering Youth Empowering Adults conferences were held each summer. This annual conference hosted by SYAB members, focused on permanency planning, communication, and other youth issues considered important and appropriate by the youth. SYAB members designed, planned and facilitated all activities. This conference served not only as a training opportunity for both youth and adults, but also allows the youth and their significant adults to interact to address needs and concerns. In addition, they are provided the opportunity to relate to each other on a less formal setting.

CD is a member of the National Independent Living Association (NILA). Missouri's current and former Independent Living Coordinators have represented Region VII as a board member of NILA for the past six years.

In 2001 CD purchased the *Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life Skills* through Casey Family Programs. This guidebook was used to develop a curriculum to train staff and placement providers who work with older youth to address and understand issues that confront youth. Two sites, one each in eastern and western Missouri was chosen to pilot the training. The pilot training period ended by October 2002. The training has since been made available as recommended in-service training for placement providers and staff who with older youth.

**Help youth receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment: and;**

**Help youth prepare for and enter postsecondary training and educational institutions:**

CD continues to identify educational needs and provide assistance, support or assist in the development of an educational plan for all youth, with the expectation that youth should have a minimum of a GED as an overall goal. Job training are available the One-Stop Centers. Youth are also eligible for other youth training programs through the Workforce Investment Act and Welfare to Work.

Missouri's life skills training curriculum is both specific and intentional which provides youth with tangible and intangible skills. It provides youth with real-world practice experiences. There are 11 core modules covered under the training, two of which deals with educational/vocational planning and employment skills. The goal of the educational/vocational module will provide youth with an understanding of the educational/vocational options available to them. The objectives are to assist you in assessing his/her current educational level, identifying their short and long term goals, and identifying available educational/vocational and career options. The objectives of the employment skills modules are to assist youth in being able to identify resources for finding a job, identifying information needed to complete job applications and resumes, identifying interviewing techniques, and demonstrating the interviewing techniques.

Education is approached in a comprehensive and integrated manner. CD believes that early and on-going support for higher education or vocational training is extremely important in preparing youth for self-sufficiency, reliance and independence. All youth are required to be enrolled high school, post-secondary education or training program while in DFS custody. All youth are encouraged to have a minimum of GED as their overall goal. Graduation from high school is preferred and acknowledged as an important milestone in their lives. In an effort to recognize such a noteworthy endeavor, foster youth graduating from high school may apply to receive up to a \$200.00 incentive to be used toward graduation announcements, senior portraits, a class ring or other graduation expenses.

Prior to the passage of the Stable and Safe Families Act and the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program, any foster and former foster youth who had a high school diploma or GED and were interested in pursuing higher education or post-secondary training, received educational and training assistance through Chafee funds. Contractors have been employed to provide services to the youth on an one to one basis or in a group setting to

assist youth in choosing the best post-secondary education or training plan, completing college applications or the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

**Provide personal and emotional support to youth through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults:**

The ILP Coordinator continues to remain involved in the Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP). MMP is structured around an alliance between the public and private sectors. MMP sites implement structured work site and community mentoring opportunities for youth. There are ten community partnership sites in Missouri. Its program goal is to assist young people, through mentored employment and support, gain and develop work experience and ethics. MMP staff provides resource coordination for participants and volunteer mentors are recruited from the community. Mentors provide positive role modeling, friendship and guidance around employment and parenting issues to youth who are entering the workplace or have become parents. The objectives of MMP are to encourage continuation of education and to provide employment opportunities enhanced through mentoring.

Prior to youth being assigned a mentor or beginning a job search, youth must complete 20-30 hours of job readiness training. This training consists of “soft skills”, resume preparation, and mock interviews. There is a deemed level of pass/fail for each of the three components. Once they have passed and been assigned, mentors are asked to give a one-year commitment.

Mentoring services are available to any youth eligible for Chafee services. A key component to Chafee services and exit planning is to ensure youth have positive personal relationships with adults in their community prior to leaving state custody. Services are provided based on the individualized needs of the youth.

**Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age:**

Missouri has for many years provided services and support for youth between 18 and 21 years of age. While in foster care, these older youth are provided with the same services as the younger youth. In addition, older foster youth also receive education, training, and other services necessary to obtain employment, prepare for and enter post-secondary education and training.

Aftercare services are flexible, short term and used as a **safety net** to meet the needs of the youth after they have exited CD custody. The needs and array of services vary depending on the needs of the former foster care youth. Chafee funds may be expended for a variety of reasons and should be used as a support for the young adult, not an on-going supplemental funding source. Aftercare services provided include emergency/crisis intervention services, housing/room and board, educational/job training/employment assistance, and other support services. Room and board services provided include security and utility deposits, rent, utilities, food, start-up kits, basic necessities, and basic furniture. Support services provided include life skills training, transportation, child care, clothing, and other expenses as needed. Youth may receive up to a lifetime maximum of \$3,500.00 for any one or a combination of

all these categorical services during their eligibility period, excluding educational and training assistance.

During FFY 2001, a brochure was developed to promote Chafee services for youth and former foster care youth. A letter was also sent to all youth who had exited custody at age 18 and had not yet reached age 21 to inform them about the available Chafee Aftercare services.

**Make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary training and education to youth who have aged out of foster care:**

Missouri does not have a state tuition waiver program and currently uses base Chafee funding to provide post-secondary educational and training assistance to eligible foster and former foster care youth for the Tuition and Books Program. CD introduced the college/vocational school tuition/books program in December 1992 for eligible foster care youth. When ILP funding was increased through CFCIP, financial assistance was expanded to the former foster care youth population. The program assisted youth with financial assistance in post-secondary educational and training assistance. A maximum expenditure of \$3,500.00 was allowable per youth, per year during the eligibility period.

When Congress appropriated the \$42 million for payments to implement the Education and Training Voucher Program, allowable expenses increased from up to \$3,500 to \$5,000 per year for post-secondary education and training.

Requirements for eligible youth to receive assistance are:

- Youth must be eligible to receive Chafee services;
- Youth must demonstrate academic success or motivation in school (generally a “C” average or its equivalency or as otherwise agreed upon with the plan) or in a training program;
- Youth must be accepted to an accredited college/university, vocational school or certified training program;
- Appropriate scholarships, grants and other financial assistance must be explored and utilized, and;
- There must be reasonable assurance the youth will graduate from the educational or training program.

**(b) Design and delivery of trust fund program:**

At this time, Missouri has not developed or established a trust fund program for youth receiving independent or transitional living services.

**(c) Description of the extent to which the funds and services assisted youth 18-21 in making the transition from foster care to self sufficiency:**

Refer to section (a) above.



**(d) Information on specific training that was conducted during the five year in support of the goals and objectives of the State's CFCIP (section 477 (b)(D)):**

ILP Staff and advisory board youth continues to provide ongoing informational meetings and training statewide to staff, foster parents/providers, and the community concerning available Chafee ILP services. Since 2000, SYAB has hosted the state Youth Empowering Youth and Adults conference. Participants in the conference included placement providers, case managers, juvenile court staff, and other community members. The focuses of the conference have been on permanency planning issues, communication, stress management, adolescent behaviors, and real youth issues and concerns.

During FY 2003 Casey Family Programs and the National Resource Center for Youth Services (NRCYS) provided technical assistance on the Ansell/Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA). A contracted provider from Casey Family Programs introduced the ACLSA to approximately 40 ILP staff and contractors and NRCYS provide a two day training to the state ILP Coordinator and Specialists on how to use the assessment. This assessment is used to determine the youth's readiness for independent living skills and services. This procedural requirement became effective on October 2003.

In FY2002 ILP staff collaborated with the Division's Staff Training and Development Unit to develop a curriculum using Casey Family Programs, *Ready, Set, Fly! A Parent's Guide to Teaching Life skills*. The training curriculum was developed to be used to train staff and service providers to work with youth by addressing and understanding the issues that confront youth as they transition to self-sufficiency. Two counties were chosen as the test site to pilot the training. The training was well received and the feedback provided information on the varying needs between staff and service providers. The curriculum was adapted to include training of CD staff and contractors. A policy memorandum was sent to all staff in February 2004 introducing the availability of this training opportunity. It is the Director's recommendation that all staff and foster parents working with youth ages 14 and older undergo this training. In-service training hours are made available upon the completion of the training.

ILP staff and Staff Training and Development also collaborated during FY 2003 to develop a statewide curriculum to be used for training of providers interesting in becoming a Transitional Living Advocate (TLA). TLAs are required to undergo 18 hours of pre-service, specialized training on adolescent needs and issues. This updated training curriculum is now available for use.

On March 23-24, 2004, two technical assistance days were utilized through the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues for AFSA training in the Southwest Region. Its focus was on permanency issues and services for older foster youth and the appropriate use of Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement.

**(e) If the CFCIP services (e.g., life skills training, tutoring and other educational assistance, housing, employment and mental health counseling) to be provided in the upcoming fiscal year differ significantly from those which were described in the CFSP,**

**then it is necessary to update the CFSP to reflect any additions or changes in services or program design.**

- Eligibility criteria for aftercare services have changed from the original eligibility criteria as set forth in the CFCIP FFY 01-04 state plan. The original criteria stipulated only those youth who left foster care at age 18 or older but have not yet reached age 21 were eligible for Chafee Aftercare services. Eligibility requirements changed to youth who have left foster care because they have attained age 18, or who left foster care between the ages of 17 ½ and 18 and had been in continuous foster care for six months or more, but have not yet reached age 21.
- The lifetime spending limit for Chafee services is \$3,500 per youth per lifetime, not including post-secondary educational or training services. Within the \$3,500, there were categorical spending limits. The categorical spending limits were eliminated for FFY 04 as the results of recommendations from stakeholders and staff. Incentives paid to youth participating in life skills training would not count toward the \$3,500 limit.
- During FFY 04 room and board services were extended to foster care youth, ages 18 and older. Previously, foster youth ages 18 and older could not access Chafee room and board services due their status in foster care and state funds already used for their maintenance. Chafee room and board services are available to supplement additional needs of youth which are not traditionally paid out of state funding.
- Missouri enhanced the capacity to better serve the younger youth population by setting aside a portion of the Chafee funding to supplement state funds to provide hands-on learning opportunities. However, due to severe budgetary constraints, funding for the *Choices* program was eliminated by the Legislature from the state FY 04 budget. This provided CD with the opportunity to re-evaluate the program for youth under age 16. A workgroup consisting of CD staff and contractors was assigned to review the *Choices* program, which focused primarily on teaching “soft skills” to younger youth in a classroom setting. A practical application program was developed and became available for use in June 2004.

**(f) Section 477(b)(3)(G) requires States to certify that Chafee benefits and services will be made available to Indian children in the State on the same basis as to other children in the State.**

Missouri does not have federally recognized Indian tribes in the state. However, there are two active Indian Centers, located in Kansas City and Springfield. Representatives from the Indian Centers were invited and participated in each of the stakeholders meeting held annually. Any youth deemed eligible for Chafee services are provided services and supports regardless of race, gender or ethnic origin.

**(g) For States that used basic Chafee funds for education and training vouchers prior to FY 2003, as clarified in Information Memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-02-07, describe the design and delivery of the voucher program and how much was spent on the State’s program.**

Missouri does not have a state tuition waiver program. CD introduced the college/vocational school tuition/books program in December 1992. The intent of the program was to assist foster youth ages 16-21 with financial assistance in the payment of college/vocational school tuition and books to assist in the preparation for independent living. When CFCIP services were expanded CD offered former foster youth, who exited custody at age 18 or after, but have not reached age 21, the opportunity to access educational assistance. There was an annual limit of \$3,500 and funds were used for tuition and books only. Youth must be accepted to an accredited public college/university or vocational school and have explored and exhausted all appropriate scholarships, grants and other financial assistance prior to applying and accessing Chafee funds. Annual expenditures did not exceed \$100,000.